Curse of a Warrior

Frank "Poncho" Vallejos was Bobby's father. He and wife Gertrude lived in Trinidad, Colorado; about 15 miles southwest of Uncle Diego's house near Hoehne.

Barreling down the two-lane state highway, in his old truck, Frank was on his way to pick up his son. Over the last couple of years, when his boy came home from visiting his extended family; he was full of stories he had heard all before, when those same relatives tried to make an Indian out of him.

In the never-ending chore of gathering wood to heat the home, Frank was going to 'kill two birds with one stone'. Jamming the old Chevy truck into second gear, Frank turned off the highway. He stomped on the gas and careened down the dirt road. Potholes and gully washes tossed the truck recklessly, creating a plume of dust that could be seen for miles.

Upon arriving at Diego's adobe, Bobby exploded out the door to greet his dad. Diego and Kiwidi also came to the door, waving half-heartedly.

"Come on boy, we're gonna get some firewood before we head home." Frank declared. He had no desire to visit with family.

Bobby groaned and turned back to say so long. Abuela Kiwidi patted the boy on his shoulder, leaned close to him and whispered,

"You remember what we've taught you Coyotito, you be a 'Straight Arrow'.

Bobby smiled, remembering her last lesson several days before. She had asked him to haul some water to the meager garden she had behind their house. An hour later she asked him again, and Bobby had made a smart aleck remark. In an instant abuela Kiwidi had a firm grip of the short hairs on the scruff of his neck, pulling up sharply. "YEOW!!!" he yelled and turned to take a swing at her. Abuela grabbed him in a bear hug, then calmly explained to him why a man should *never* hit a woman.

"I'll remember abuela, see ya later!" and he waved at her and Diego as he headed for his dad's truck.

Bobby was trying to tell his dad about the things that had happened during his visit. Frank just mumbled 'yeah', now and then. Frank didn't head back towards the highway; he drove further into the foothills beyond Diego's adobe. Bobby was growing restless; he could tell where his dad was heading. He was heading for Round Hill.

"I kept telling him not to go up that hill and get that wood, it belongs to the warriors. And he says, 'You're so god damn crazy it's ridiculous. Get over there and use the ax and cut some wood. I gotta go to the bathroom.'…bathroom my ass, he went to get something to drink outta the truck.

Frank had heard *all* those stupid stories when he was a boy and ignored his son's warnings. Frank was more interested in the gallon of homemade hooch that he stashed behind the seat.

Grumbling to himself, Bobby pulled the double-headed axe from the back of the truck. He drug it through the dirt towards an old juniper with dead, fallen limbs. Bobby took the axe, stood on the handle and said a prayer for forgiveness. With a heavy sigh, Bobby took the axe and banged it against the old juniper, careful not to cut the wood…it was the warrior's wood. Yet he knew better than to disobey his father. Frank had been gone for a long time.

"Pretty soon he comes back with this shitty grin on his face, that's how he gets when he's been drinkin. And he says,' How come you ain't cut that thing down yet?' I told him, the warriors have got it, and they won't let it go."

Angry with his son and the dwindling daylight, Frank grabs the axe. The lack of resistance caused the axe to smack him in the face. The double edge put a nasty slice into Frank's cheek.

"God damn kid, see what you made me do!" I says, "I didn't do it dad, you did. You were the one who grabbed the ax." He says, "No, it was you're crazy warriors!"

Bobby stormed off while Frank wiped his bloody cheek on his sleeve. Frank began swinging the axe at the dead juniper limbs. CRACK! CRACK! Bobby went back to the truck, mad as could be. He didn't want to make the ancestors angry, but abuela Kiwidi was clear that would lead to bad consequences.

"He had to rub it in, and I got mad. (I leaned over) grabbed the damn key out of the ignition and threw it away!"

As the sun slid lower beyond the distant ridge, Frank had put about half a load of wood into the back of the truck. He climbed into the cab of the truck, breathing heavily. As he gave Bobby a dirty look, he reached for the ignition. Confusion, coupled with the hazy remnants of the hooch, made Frank fumble on the floor and the seat of the truck.

"Where's the damn ignition key!" Frank bellowed.

"I don't know…what's a 'nition' key?"

Frank bumbled out of the truck and was looking on the ground.

"It's getting late, we should go home!" whined Bobby, smirking to himself.

"I'm not gonna walk that far!" Frank growled as he searched his pockets.

Bobby took off anyway, running several miles back to his uncle's house. The late dusk of evening turned into a brisk, cold star-lite night. A couple hours later, carrying kerosene lanterns and a couple of blankets, Bobby led Diego back to the sacred Round Hill. Frank sat shivering in the cab of his truck.

So much for the vengeance of the warriors, who apparently can come in any size.